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Picking Films a Fun Part of the Job at the TOM

By Kim Skene, Program Assistant, Tom Thomson Art Gallery



Still from: *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*

For as long as I can remember – I have loved movies. There was TVO’s Saturday Night at the Movies, at my house, hosted as much by my grandparents as by Elwy Yost. Perennial broadcasts of all the holiday classics were late at night and commercial-filled before *record* and *skip* buttons, and I was ashamed at how late my parents would let me stay up. There were Saturday matinees at the Centre Theatre where one single dollar got a kid into the show, a popcorn and a pop, and I still had a dime to call for a ride. My family spent many Saturday evenings at the Owen Sound Twin Drive-In Theatres - pony rides included. Saturday night was date night at the Roxy Theatre during the teen years. When VHS became commonplace there were all night movie-marathons. New Galaxy Cinemas, DVD players, a Galaxy Cinemas refurb, video-on-demand, BluRay, streaming...I still love movies and just can’t get enough. I make sure I am at the theatre on time to watch all the trailers, and I never skip them on rentals. What a fortuitous fit then, when I started working at the Tom Thomson Art Gallery and with *Gallery Night at the Movies*.

In just over a week, *Gallery Night at the Movies* launches its 17<sup>th</sup> season. A culmination of dedicated volunteers, committed patrons and avid movie-goers, the series features nine films from September to May, presented by the TOM in conjunction with *TIFF: The Film Circuit*, Galaxy Cinemas and Community Sponsors. The series has evolved since its first presentation in 1996, (*Margaret’s Museum*) to multiple screenings with several off-shoot programs, but its mandate has stayed the same: to provide regional filmgoers with transformative experiences through Canadian and international independent films they would otherwise not have the opportunity to see in our area. The series serves as a major fundraiser for the Gallery, supporting a variety of programming at the TOM.

Programming *Gallery Night at the Movies* is an exciting yet challenging process. I risk the proverbial eye-roll when I stress the difficulty of sifting through dozens of trailers, clips, stills, reviews and interviews for each film booking we confirm. There are a multitude of film critics, some tried-and-true, some self-

proclaimed; there is Leonard Maltin and there is Roger Ebert – and they all have something to say. Finding something to satisfy the over 500 cinephiles who participate in the Gallery’s movie programs is a daunting task. Critical acclaim does not always ensure audience appreciation; box-office reports do not always indicate good cinema. Timing is everything – there is often a small window of opportunity wherein print availability successfully intersects with 35 mm versus DVD release schedules and audience interest. This season sees the switch to the new digital DCP format that ensures better sound and image quality, improved access, and easier transportation. (We regularly hauled 80 pound film canisters to and from the theatre.) There will be the die-hard celluloid dissenters. There are hits and there are misses. A film may not always be *enjoyed*, but our choices can always be appreciated.

We begin this season with the film *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, starring a who’s who of veteran British actors who have always played well with our group. Our second feature was the winner of last season’s Cadillac People’s Choice Award at TIFF, *Where Do We Go Now?* And our third film, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, was Winner of the Grand Jury Prize and Best Cinematography award at the Sundance Film Festival. I am excited about the upcoming season and passes are still available for all three screening times, 2:00, 4:30 and 7:15 pm, – just call the Gallery. I hope to see you at the movies!